



JFK High School



Ridgemont High School



Find Your Old School Here


[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Travel](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cal](#)

- [JOBS](#)
- [CARS](#)
- [HOMES](#)
- [APARTMENTS](#)

Search for [Back to Home](#) > [News](#) >

Tuesday, Feb 03, 2004

## Dallas & State

>> [Shopp](#)

- [Search C](#)
- [Place a C](#)
- [Newspaj](#)
- [Find a Lc](#)
- [Meet So](#)
- [Find a H](#)
- [Book Air](#)
- [Vacations](#)
- [Moving I](#)
- [Star-Tel](#)
- [Mortgage](#)



### News

- [Today's Front Page](#)
- [Breaking News](#)
- [News 2 Use](#)
- [Fort Worth](#)
- [Stock Show](#)
- [Arlington](#)
- [Northeast](#)
- [Dallas/State](#)
- [Nation](#)
- [Election 2004](#)
- [World](#)
- [Iraq](#)
- [Weird News](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Traffic](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Opinions](#)
- [Cheer & Jeers](#)
- [Letters to the editor](#)

### Business

### Sports

### Entertainment

### Living

### Classifieds

### Archives

### Contact Us

### Shopping

Posted on Thu, Jan. 15, 2004

Star-Telegram

## New mission gives a lift to Johnson Space Center

By John Moritz  
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

**HOUSTON** - Mike Heiser welcomed President Bush's announcement that the United States will begin laying the groundwork for the human exploration of Mars the same way a marathon runner would welcome a surge of adrenalin 20 miles into the race.



STAR-TELEGRAM/PAUL MOSELEY

Johnson Space Center workers watch President Bush's announcement on Wednesday. "It's good," said engineer Mike Heiser, "to finally see something positive and constructive being advocated."

"I think it's something we needed, especially with all of the stuff that's going on in the world," said Heiser, who was among 800 engineers, analysts and programmers at the Johnson Space Center who watched Bush's satellite feed announcing the initiative from NASA headquarters in Washington on Wednesday. "It's good to finally see something positive and constructive being advocated."

The announcement that NASA's mission will be dramatically redirected comes after a year of uncertainty and lingering sorrow at the sprawling space center stemming from the loss of the space shuttle Columbia, which disintegrated over Texas on Feb. 1.

Space center officials invited the workers to watch the announcement in the movie-theater-style Olin Teague Auditorium, where they had watched countless shuttle launches before the Columbia disaster grounded the program.

An exuberant Derek Green, a NASA computer programmer who bounded out of the auditorium carrying his 5-year-old daughter, Laura, on his shoulders, said he would be ready to begin work as soon as the new marching orders are handed down from the space

agency's brass.

"I'm real eager. I think it's great to have a new directive," said Green, who has been with NASA for about five years. "I think it's real significant that we are finishing out the projects that we started, particularly the international space station. I think it's significant that we'll continue to work with our international partners because all of our future missions will probably involve international partners, particularly the mission to Mars."

Asked about the significance of his bringing his daughter to hear the announcement, Green replied: "She's a dreamer like me. She's fascinated by science."

For the Johnson Space Center, a campuslike environment that anchors the upscale waterfront community of Clear Lake about 40 miles south of downtown Houston, the new initiative means at least economic stability, and perhaps even growth, said Cindy Kennedy, chairwoman of the region's chamber of commerce. About 3,000 government employees work at the space center and about 15,000 others in the area work for the army of contractors who do business with NASA.

"I think the president's announcement is going to mean a brighter future for the Clear Lake area," she said.

Heiser and Green said the president's announcement has ramifications worldwide.

"I like the fact that he mentioned the international aspect of it. I was hoping he was going to do that because I think that in this day and age, we can't afford to just go it alone," said Heiser, an eight-year space center engineer who works on the international space station operation.

Madhurita Sengupta, 19, and Laura Sarmiento, 20, found themselves swept up in the hubbub and media attention that Bush's speech brought to the space center. Both are students at the University of Texas at Austin who work for NASA through a cooperative program with the college. Their first day on the job was Monday.

"It's really exciting to just be starting out and they announce this new program," Sarmiento said. "It's like we're watching history being made."

Added Sengupta: "We can say that we were here when everything got under way."

---

ONLINE: <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/>

John Moritz, (512) 476-4294 [jmoritz@star-telegram.com](mailto:jmoritz@star-telegram.com)





[email this](#)



[print this](#)



[license this](#)



[reprint this](#)



©2004 Media Properties  
All rights reserved.  
Do not distribute without  
written permission.

[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Living](#) | [Travel](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [About Knight Ridder](#) | [Contact Us](#)